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BETHEL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SOCIETY ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN TOPS \$7000 GOAL

Once again much credit is due Howard W. Cole, 1984 Endowment Campaign Chairman and his committee Barbara D. Brown, John B. Head, Alden T. Kennett and E. Louise Lincoln for successfully raising more than \$7000 from 318 contributors, an all-time record. Deepest gratitude is expressed to all of the following for making it possible:

James and Consuelo Alger, Bethel; Mary Ann Alspach, Westminster, MD; Kimball and Ruth Ames, Bethel; Olive Anderson, Newry; Ernest and Alberta Angevine, Bethel; Anonymous; Arthur and Ruth Barker, Stafford Springs, CT; Judith and Bradley Barker, Bethel; Clarence A. Bartlett, Nashua, NH; Clark and Neda Bartlett, Bethel; Alvin Barth, Bethel; Arthur and Ruth Bean, Springfield, VT; Clinton C. Bennett, Fort Wayne, IN; Donald and Katherine Bennett, Bethel; Lester and Bessie Bennett, Rumford; Bethel Auto Sales, Bethel; Bethel Savings Bank, Bethel; Charles and Patricia Blake, Bethel; Elizabeth Blake, Bethel; Otto and Kaye Blosssey, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Lillian Bomhoff, Mendham, NJ; Joseph A. Brenchick, Fryeburg; Carl and Lettie Brooks, West Paris; Bernice E. Brown, Rumford Center; James and Beatrice Brown, Bethel; Julia B. Brown, Bethel, in memory of Bea and Cecil Conrad; Marie C. Brown, Bethel; Richard and Doris Brown, Bethel; Vernon and Maxine Brown, Bethel; Grace F. Buck, Bethel; Gurdon S. Buck, Watertown, MA; Dr. Richard and Catherine Bush, Belmont, MA; Guy and Nancy Butler, Bethel; Donald and Mary Calderwood, Mesa, AZ; Harold W. Chandler, Live Oak, FL; Richard S. Chandler, Woods Hole, MA; Franklin and Rosalind Chapman, Bethel; Philip S. Jr. and Daphne Chapman, Peabody, MA; Charlie's Place, Bethel; Dr. Donald M. Christie, Poughkeepsie, NY; Norman and Sylvia Clanton, Bethel; Fillmore and Shirley Clough, Bethel; William and Marta Clough, Bethel; Ellen Coffin, Norway; Howard W. and Virginia Cole, Bethel; Mary Lou Cole, Norwood, MA; Wilfred and Eleanor Conary, Bethel; Helen M. Connolly, Port Ludlow, WA; Rupert and Eva Conroy, Auburn; Aline Crockett, Bethel; Clayton and Lola Crockett, Bethel; Joanne Crounse, Danvers, MA; Marjorie F. Cummings, Bethel; Richard and Rita Davis, Bethel; Louise S. Day, Biddeford; Richard B. Doherty, Rumford; Dana and Barbara Douglass, Bethel; Hugh and Mariann Durgin, Bethel; Dale Dyke, Rumford; L. W. Dymont, Jr., Hampton, VA; Rodney and Kathryn Eames, Cape Elizabeth; Shirley Bartlett Eby, Stockton, CA; Donald and Edith Eddy, Bethel; Lucretia Evans, Bronx, NY; Edith Eypper, Bethel; Howard and Alice Fales, West Redding; Raymond L. Fales, Braintree, MA; Walter and Phyllis Fales, Royal Oak, MI; Edna Fallon, Bethel; Norman and Barbara Ferguson, Hanover; Edward T. Fleming, Arcadia, CA; Dorothy H. Fortier, Falmouth; Myra Foster, Bethel; Gerald and Susan Freeman, Jacksonville, FL; George and Virginia Gamble, Hano-



Riverside Park, c. 1930

Photograph courtesy of Ralph S. Hall

THE BETHEL AGRICULTURAL FAIR AND RIVERSIDE PARK by Yvonne B. Nowlin

Editor's Note: The following history of the Bethel Agricultural Fair and Riverside Park was originally written as an independent study paper for the External Credit Option program, a "study-at-home" alternative to regular classroom diploma work, available through S.A.D. 44's Adult and Community Educational division. Mrs. Nowlin, a Newry resident who, with her husband John, is a Society member, has also contributed an illustrated manuscript history of Newry's Latchford-Bryant Mill (on the site of the present Sunday River Inn) to the Society's archival collections.

Farming was the principal occupation of the earliest inhabitants of Bethel and still is important today. The most progressive among Bethel's farmers were active in various organizations for the advancement of agriculture and the enrichment of rural life. Agricultural societies were the first such organizations to have a decided impact on the farmers of Bethel. Their original purpose being educational, the members met together, read papers, exchanged experiences, and sometimes heard speakers on agricultural subjects. They conducted field tests for various purposes, gave premiums for the introduction of purebred animals and new varieties of fruit, grain and vegetables, and for the production of better crops. In 1819, the Somerset Agricultural Society held at Norridgewock the first agricultural fair in Maine, called by one observer "a brilliant success." After the state began to pay stipends in 1832, the holding of cattle shows and fairs became common, the object being to interest and stimulate friendly competition among farmers in adopting better methods and practices. Shortly

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ver, NH; Guy and Madeleine Gibbs, Bethel; Gordon and Mary Gillies, Bethel; Paul Given, New Gloucester; Goodwins Inc., Norway; R. W. Goodwin, Norway; Celia K. Gorman, Bethel; Lillian H. Grant, Gorham, ME; Alice T. Gray, Portland; Paul and Patricia Gray, South Windsor, CT; Paul Groves, Brooklyn, NY; Agnes Haines, Bethel; Floribel Haines, Bethel; Harold E. Hall, Hebron; Ralph and Marion Hall, Bethel; Mildred Hanscom, South Portland; Richard and Delora Harding, Houston, TX; Carolyn Wight Harrison, Spindale, NC; John and Cathy Hart, Bangor; Charles S. and Hazel Haselton, Bangor; Colwyn and Judy Haskell, Bethel; Edward H. Hastings, Milton, MA; Euphemia Hastings, Bethel; Robert D. and Florence Hastings, Bethel; Lloyd and Florence Hathaway, North Abington, MA; John and Fumiko Head, Bethel; Olive A. Head, West Bethel; Clayton and Helen Heath, Norway; Dorothea J. Hitzrot, Bethel; Barbara H. Honkala, Falls Church, VA; Richard and Jane Hosterman, West Bethel; John Howe, Rockport, MA; Rodney K. and Geraldine S. Howe, Bethel; Stanley Howe, Bethel, in memory of Cecil Conrad and John Grover; Harlan and Gertrude Hutchins, Bethel; Lee and Virginia Hutchins, Bethel; Robert E. and Gertrude P. Innis, Westboro, MA; Charlotte K. Johnson, Westford, MA; Paul and Jean Kailey, Bethel; Royden and Alice Keddy, Gorham; Alden T. and Mabel A. Kennett, Bethel; Charles and Mary Keoskie, Bethel; John R. King, Lakeland, FL; Dr. Werner and Irene Kohlmeyer, Bethel; Karl and Helen Kraul, Portland; Eugene and Katherine LaFond, San Diego, CA; Brig. Gen. (Retired) Harold and Edith Lawrence, Portland; Rev. Clifford and Elizabeth Laws, Kittery Point; Daisy LeClair, Bethel; E. Louise Lincoln, Bethel; Doris Lord, Haines City, FL; Frank and Beatrice Lowell, Newry; Maine Federation of Women's Clubs; Paul McGuire, Bethel; Pearline S. McMillin, Bethel; Nancy H. Mercer, Bethel; Barbara Miller, Bethel; Edward L. and Mary A. Mills, Locke Mills; Marilyn Mollicone, Augusta; James and Josephine Monahan, Bethel; Joan Mooney, Ottawa, Ontario; Grace P. Morrill, Bethel; Helen Morton, Newry; Herbert H. Morton, III, Andover, MA; Carol Nesius, Chicago, IL; Walter and Hazel Newell, Locke Mills; Herbert and Evelyn Nickerson, Bethel; George and Marjorie Noll, Bethel; John and Yvonne Nowlin, Bethel; Leslie A. Noyes, Bethel; Margaret H. Oakes, Augusta; Florence E. O'Connor, West Paris; Laura L. Orcutt, Portland; Marvin and Trijntje Ouwinga, Bethel; Earlon and Mary Paine, Bethel; John and Caroline Palmer, East Stoneham; Francis Parkman, Chestnut Hill, MA; Harry and Eleanor Parsons, Bethel; Louis and Florice Paul, Bethel; Roger and Louise Poisson, Plantation, FL; Archibald and Persis Post, Newry; Jeanette S. Potsaid, Hanover, MA; Betty Prescott, Bangor; Anthony and Eleanor Pugliese, Bethel; Redwood Motel, Bethel; Mary T. Rice, Colorado Springs, CO; Marian K. Rich, Roanoke, VA; Vance and Janet Richardson, Portland; Art and Eleanor Ritchings, Petersburg, VA; Jacklyn C. Roberts, Bethel; Roger E. Robertson, Northridge, CA; Emily C. Saunders, Bethel; Wallace and Frances Saunders, Bethel; Bill and Margaret Sawyer, Waterford; Dorothy G. Schmidt, Augusta; Dr. Charles and Edith Seashore, Washington, DC; Roxanne Twitchell Sly, Brooklin; Mary Ann Smith, Harrison; Elizabeth Stedman, Ottawa, Ont.; Clyde and Bertha Stevens, Bethel; Dale and Barbara Stevens, Bethel; Thomas and Dorothy Stevens, East Greenwich, RI; Ralph and Gertrude Stevens, Damariscotta; Alice R. Stewart, Orono; Joanne P. Stewart, Kalamazoo, MI in memory of her grandfather, William Welcome Peabody of Gilead; Dexter M. and Janet E. Stowell; George P., III and Mary L. Stowell, Yarmouth; Amy Penner Stroud, Pennsauken, NJ; Sunday River Inn, Bethel; Robert B. and Violet P. Swain, East Andover, in memory of his mother Lucie Morse Swain; Glenn E. and Marion B. Swan, Mexico; Douglas Swett, Center Conway, NH; Kent and

Ruth Taylor, Westbrook; Ruth Tebbetts and Fred Brousseau, San Francisco, CA; Mildred C. Thomas, Bethel; David D. and Dorothy Irma Thompson, Bethel; Donald and Muriel Thompson, West Springfield, MA; Bertha Thurston, Bethel; Floyd and Stephanie Thurston, Bethel; Margaret Joy Tibbetts, Bethel; John and Margaret Trinward, Bethel; Corinne Twitchell, Portland; Mary Valentine, Bethel; Thelma Van Den Kerchhoven, Buckport; Joseph, Jr. and Sue Vedella, Presque Isle; F. Daniel Vogt and Jennifer Paone-Vogt, Essex Junction, VT; Frank and Janet Vogt, Bethel; Gail Waldron Walker, MD, La Jolla, CA; Margaret S. Ward, King of Prussia, PA; Ruth H. Watson, East Sullivan; Millie B. Wentzell, Bethel; W. J. Wheeler & Co. Inc., South Paris; Elizabeth D. Whiteman, Jenkintown, PA; Daniel and Rosalie Wight, Rumford; Ruth Wight, Bethel; Claus and Joan T. Wiese, Bethel; Roman and Elizabeth Woronzoff, Bethel; Robert and Jeanette G. York, Orrs Island; Archie, Jr. and Jane Young, Bethel; Deborah S. Zorach, Brunswick.

Agricultural Fair (Continued from page 1)

before the Civil War, fairs began to add horse trotting, both as an added attraction and to encourage the raising of trotting stock for which Maine was becoming famous. This gradually led to the public preferring to be entertained rather than educated, so that by 1900 fairs had lost much of their educational value.

The average farmer of the mid-nineteenth century was not a particularly great reader; in fact, there was not much on agriculture for him to read until fairly late in the century. Dr. Nathaniel True of Bethel, a member of the Maine Board of Agriculture and a major contributor to the paper, *Maine Farmer* wrote much of interest to farmers about agriculture and horticulture. He also was the leading spirit in the Bethel Farmer's Club, probably the first farmer's club in Maine. It was formed at Bethel, December 22, 1853 and for many years was one of the most active in the state until the arrival of the Grange in Maine in the 1870's.

According to Clarence A. Day, all of the early Maine Farmer's Clubs were very similar in organization and activities. The Bethel Farmer's Club met twice a month through the winter at the homes of various members. Both men and women attended; while the men discussed agricultural topics, the women had an informal social gathering of their own in another part of the house. Apples were the only refreshments permitted except at infrequent intervals when the women served supper to the entire group. The club averaged about forty members who each paid a one dollar initiation fee.

As early as 1857, the Bethel Farmer's Club sponsored a local agricultural fair and exhibit. All sources seem to agree that in the years between 1859 and 1890, when the fair was held, the exhibition portion took place at Pattee's Hall on Spring Street on Bethel Hill. Though newspaper accounts mention trotting and riding events for many of these years, the actual location for the grounds used remains unknown. The fairs of 1860 and 1865 received coverage in the *Oxford Democrat* and seemed to both have been sponsored by the Bethel Farmer's Club. The 1860 account stated the fair had grown to be one of the prominent institutions of Bethel and interest increased yearly.

By 1860 Farmer's Clubs could be found in all parts of Maine and by 1874 there must have been as many as seventy-five to one hundred clubs in Maine, most of them short-lived. The principal reason for their failure was that so many of the new clubs were brought in by outside influences rather than by strong and devoted local leadership. The Bethel Farmer's Club, according to Lapham's *History of Bethel*, "was in existence for ten or twelve years and accomplished a great amount of good." Another major reason for the downfall of the Farmer's Club was

the growth of the Grange, for as in the case of farmers clubs, subordinate Granges were local organizations.

While the development of the Grange became important in Bethel during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a local agricultural society seems to have been organized soon after the discontinuation of the Farmer's Club. Agricultural fairs in Bethel continued to be centered around Pattee's Hall and were organized and supported by the Bethel Agricultural Society.

A poster describing the "Bethel Town Fair" of 1872 exists in the collection of the Bethel Historical Society. A rare and valuable document, the poster highlights events and the people involved. Among the things on exhibit were garden vegetables, fruits, breads and honey, furniture, agricultural implements, hops, boots, shoes, harnesses and leather. Included in the events were ladies riding, foot races and horse trotting (the location of the trotting track is unknown). Awarding committees were established for neat stock, sheep, swine, stallions, mares and colts. Those on the committee were some of Bethel's most prominent people. The names of Carter, True, Hastings, Frye, Twitchell, Mason, Kimball and Wiley appeared frequently. Premiums awarded during the fair of 1872 were undoubtedly encouraging for that era - first purse on trotting \$10.00, entry fee \$3.00; second purse \$5.00, entry fee \$1.00; ladies riding no. 1, \$2.00; no. 2, \$1.00; best under 14 years of age, \$1.00; drawing match no. 1, \$2.00; no. 2, \$1.00; foot race no. 1, \$2.00 no. 2, \$1.00; best butter, 50¢; best cheese, 50¢; best spinning done in hall, 50¢; best home-made flannel, 50¢. Centered at Pattee's Hall, the Bethel Town Fair of 1872 was obviously a success in many ways.

While the local "town fair" continued into the twentieth century, the founding in 1890 of the Riverside Park Association, altered the size and scope of the fair immeasurably. In that year, a group of Bethel men organized themselves as the Riverside Park Association and built a large trotting track on land leased from Moses A. Mason, a Mayville resident whose homestead farm, now the Norseman Inn, was built around 1799 by his grandfather Moses Mason Jr. (the father of Dr. Moses Mason of Bethel Hill). According to the lease, the conditions were that the company would build the track and give Mason twenty-five percent of all the gate money and all he could make outside, and at the end of ten years the track would revert to him or the owner of the farm. Apparently the idea of a new trotting track was supported by the Bethel Agricultural Society for the *Oxford Democrat* of October 7, 1890 announced, "a week of fair weather at Bethel has decided the farmers and horsemen to have an exhibition and fair Tuesday the seventh of October." The *Democrat* continued, "They have an excellent track on the land of Moses A. Mason where the horses, sheep and cattle will be exhibited and the dairy and fancy work will be exhibited in Pattee's Hall." In later years, the agricultural fair held here seems to have been sponsored wholly by the newly organized Riverside Park Association. In 1890, the last year an agricultural exhibit was held at Pattee's Hall, the focus of attention was of course on the new trotting track. Since the first snow of the season held off until the day after, the agricultural fair of 1890 seemed destined to succeed. Termed a "grand success" by the local papers, the fair had a wide variety of displays and events to attract large crowds. Pattee's Hall was "filled" with products from the farm and dairy, and the walls "were decorated with paintings that would be a credit to an art gallery." On exhibit near the trotting track were "fine cattle and horses, sheep and swine." Horse and oxen pulling created almost as much excitement as the trotting events.

Advertisements for the Bethel fair of 1891 began appearing in local papers in September of that year; the fact that Pattee's Hall was no longer used for exhibits allowed G.A. Plaisted to

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

I wish to add my personal appreciation to all individuals and businesses that contributed so generously to the 1984 Endowment Fund Campaign. To be able to exceed our goals in the first two years of this new endeavor speaks very well for Howard Cole and his committee as well as for the generosity of the more than three hundred contributors.

The Society has now sold the last copy of the reprint of Lapham's *History of Bethel* so for those who bought them they now have something that will grow in value in the future.

We now anticipate that the reprinting and update of *East Bethel Road* will become available in the spring of 1985. I am sure many join me in eagerly awaiting its arrival from the printer.

It is indeed gratifying to be associated with such an active organization. Members may sometimes wonder how we are able to accomplish so much with such brief monthly business meetings. Part of the answer lies in our committee structure. We have been blessed with so many willing members with varied talents and interests who make up our fourteen standing committees that work so well together.

Alden T. Kennett

announce that "barges" would run on the hour from the post office at Bethel village to the fairgrounds—a distance of just over a mile. Henceforth, exhibits were to be held in the former Mayville Congregational Church, abandoned in 1887 after the death of its long-time (and only) minister the Reverend David Garland. Earlier, it had been announced that the Bethel Horse Breeding Association (probably meant to indicate the Riverside Park Association) had installed water into "their grounds" and were making extensive preparations for the upcoming fair.

Over a two day period some 2500 tickets were sold at the gates of this first Bethel agricultural fair held entirely on the grounds of "Riverside Park." With fine weather, and an attendance that exceeded all expectations, the fair featured music by the Bethel Brass Band and meals served to over 700 people by the local Congregationalists and Methodists in two large tents.

Of the more prominent individuals and events connected with the fair, the newspaper reports were numerous. President C.M. Wormell and secretary E.M. Walker welcomed the crowd to the grounds. Dr. F.B. Tuell and Mrs. Jeanie Handley received and arranged all the articles presented. Mrs. Handley, from New York City exhibited two quilts she received as presents while visiting England in 1870 and C.W. Valentine had on exhibition an engine he made while a member of the Maine Agricultural College.

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SOCIETY OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

Alden T. Kennett, President; Marvin Ouwinga, Vice President; Theresa C. Judson, Secretary and Clerk of the Trustees; Margaret Joy Tibbetts, Treasurer; Trustees: Willard Wight, Persis Post, Ruth Wight, Donald Bennett, and Mary Keniston.

Summing up the local optimism felt by many people over the expanded fairgrounds and new location, the local poet, Addie Kendall Mason, contributed a lengthy verse to a local newspaper:

RIVERSIDE PARK

by Addie Kendall Mason

Bethel has woke from its slumbers
It really is on the move.
For years it's been quietly dozing
But I guess it's got out of the "groove".
Something has stirred up the people
And they've started quite a boom.
And the spunky ones jostle each other
And call for more elbow room.
The chair factory whistle calls shrilly,
The corn shop looms up quite near.
The lockup is quite to the purpose
From the band stand good music we hear.
The waterworks, surely all praise them
For their sparkling treasure so clear
That is brought from the distant mountains,
All the hearts of the people to cheer.
As these projects all worked to perfection,
Why staid Bethel went on a "lark"
And to finish up the proceeding
Has built a fine trotting park.
Of course it's not done for nothing,
And someone will rake in the "tin"
While some will stand back proper distance
And call it a "howling sin".
But I give my vote for the horses—
Be they black, red, brown or grey
Who can take us to "mill or to meeting"
And not be on the road all day.
But they must first learn their lessons
And the rein and the voice to obey,
For like fire, they are very good servants
But as masters a cent they don't pay.
Where is River Side Park? someone questions
Why, just over the bridge from the Hill—
Down past Mason who lives at the corner
Round back of the church in Mayville.
And there you will find some spry trotters
With no doubt a pacer or two—
"Redwoods," "Pilots" and "Patchens"
And royal descendants of "Drew".
"Black Hawks," "Knoxes" and "Fear-
Naughts".
Of course they all have a place.
But sometimes it's hard telling the winner
Till the distance flag falls in the race.
No doubt some of their pedigrees
Would reach the length of a mile.
And some whose "getup" is so funny,
It calls to your face a broad smile.
But then Bethel is really growing—
Perhaps will yet make its mark.
So come to the Fair in September
And hurrah for the River Side Park!

August 3, 1891

While the next year's events were undoubtedly similar, even more attention seems to have been placed on horse trotting during the 1892 fair. Indeed, trotting events were to be held

during the weeks before the actual opening of the fair in years to come. Announced as "a mark of great enterprise on the part of the managers of Riverside Park Association" trotting races took place on August 18th and 19th which included the famous trotter, "Nelson." Before the races took place "eminent horsemen" from Pennsylvania and New York inspected the track and pronounced it to be one of the best half-mile tracks in New England. Large crowds gathered to witness this sporting event of the season, before the actual fair took place. During the August trotting events, ladies of the Bethel Universalist Society furnished dinner at Riverside Park in their new "pavilion" erected on the grounds. Some forty feet long, and wide enough for two tables running throughout its length, the structure, in later years, housed the annual Universalist Sunday School picnic which was held during the first week of September.

The Bethel Agricultural Fair was held at Riverside Park Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, September 20-21-22, 1892. Good purses were offered and the show of stock was large and of a high standard. Most important of many improvements since the previous year's fair, was the construction of a large grandstand next to the trotting track. With its expanded facilities and interesting hall exhibits (held for the second time in the former Mayville Church), the 1892 fair passed as a very successful gathering for the promotion of local agriculture.

Previous to the fair of 1893, the property on which Riverside Park was located was sold by Moses A. Mason to Charles Ryerson of Upton for \$10,000. The sale included the Mason homestead, its many out-buildings, and the nearby trotting track, as well as nearly 200 acres of timberland. A lumber operator and hotel owner, Ryerson had purchased the Lake House at Upton in 1875; he and his wife, Ellen, successfully managed this important hostelry for many years. Upon his arrival in Bethel in 1893, Ryerson began the reconstruction of the Mason homestead, which in its expanded form became known as the "Riverside House." Moses A. Mason, the former owner, soon left Bethel on a trip that included the Chicago World's Fair and a short visit in Washington, D.C. Apparently unsatisfied with other parts of the country, Mason soon returned to Bethel where he resumed residence and became a trustee of the Riverside Park Association. The existing lease arrangement continued between Ryerson and the Park Association, for announcements of a trot and baseball tournament to be held August 22 and 23 soon appeared in local papers. For a special race held on August 23 between the horses "Griffin" and "Orvaissa" (the latter owned by G. W. Fernald of Bethel) reduced rates were offered to people taking the Grand Trunk to Bethel, and the Bethel Chair Factory shut down to allow workmen to take in the racing.

The third annual fair at Riverside Park (the first, of course, had not included the general exhibits, which were held at Pattee's Hall) took place on September 19th, 20th and 21st during which time frequent rain showers kept crowds often below the expected level. Nevertheless, the afternoon races, the amusements on the grounds (including the fair's first merry-go-round operated by Archie Heath of Gilead) the bountiful meals provided in the "Universalist Hall," and the variety of intriguing exhibits in the old church, provided something for everyone. Mr. F. W. Hunt had on exhibition the only White drophead sewing machine in the area.

The agricultural fair of 1894 was held on September 11-13 perhaps to take advantage of warmer weather. During this year's events, the fair featured the usual amount of hall exhibits and various booths and games located on the grounds. The managers of the association had also arranged to have several "special attractions," including a "mid-air performance" (proba-

bly a form of trapeze entertainment) which they noted could be best observed from the large grandstand. In the Historical Society's collections is a copy of a sixteen page booklet which describes this, the fourth annual meeting of the Riverside Park Association. Highlighted in the publication were the Association's general regulations (including the rules for exhibitors, instructions for the judges and where the all-important "forage for stock" might be located), the list of prizes, and the various committee members (divided into categories of stock, events and exhibits). Among the trustees of the group were listed Moses A. Mason, Charles E. Ryerson (the owner of the property) and William R. Chapman, who would figure prominently in the history of the fairgrounds property in years to come. Though often called a town fair, the Riverside Park event attracted as many exhibitors and livestock promoters from surrounding towns as it did from Bethel. Among the towns listed within the pages of the 1894 pamphlet were Rumford, Newry, Gilead, Albany, Upton, Andover, Greenwood, Mason, Hanover, Milton Plantation and Errol, New Hampshire. Admission for that year was listed as twenty-five cents for adults, ten cents for children and fifteen cents for "teams."

As an additional note to the agricultural fair of 1894, the *Oxford Democrat* announced that the second day of the fair (September 12th) had realized a sale of 2,000 tickets by noon and estimated that two hours later 300 more had entered the grounds. On that same day, over 300 people patronized the Universalist Hall at noon.

As early as August of the following year, premium lists of the "Riverside Agricultural Association" were published in the *Bethel News*, the local paper that henceforth is a major source of news on the fair. The potential difficulties in attracting exhibitors and other problems to the 1895 fair may be seen in a revealing excerpt from one *News* article on the fair:

There has been such a unanimous call from the citizens for a fair at Bethel this fall that the directors of Riverside Park Association have decided to push the thing through if possible and have set October 8 and 9 as the dates for the fair. There seems to be a feeling on the part of everybody that we should have a rousing, old-fashioned fair and the directors are anxious that everybody including every farmer in town should take hold of the matter in earnest and make the affair an unlimited success. Now it is evident the directors cannot do it all. They can and are ready to do a certain amount but it takes the support of the farmers and they should come forth and add their mite.

When the fair did open on the ninth of October "with H. C. Barker presiding at the gate, as usual," little evidence appeared to indicate a lack of interest in the promotion of local agriculture. In "Floral Hall," possibly the old Mayville Church, were displays of fruit, vegetables and many items crafted locally. The Bethel Chair Company displayed some "excellent specimens," including floor rockers, dining chairs, and center tables. C. S. York, a Bethel photographer, had on display photographs of every size, subject and style. Other items on display were braided and husk rugs, needlework and "wrought lace," exhibited by women ages 7 to 85. The Estey organ, exhibited for the first time by Harry Clark of South Paris, created much interest. As an encouragement to attend the fair, the managers made arrangements with the Grand Trunk Railway for half-fare tickets at all stations between Island Pond and Portland during the two days of the fair; tickets were good to return the 10th (similar arrangements had been made in 1893).

Visitors to the fair of 1895 held so late in the season, had to

build fires near the booths to make life bearable. In addition, one newspaper noted that most candy and refreshment booths were not operated by Bethel traders. The writer asked, "Why was this left to outside people?" It seems there was still room for much improvement, at least in the eyes of some Bethel people.

Besides the Universalists of Bethel, the Gould Academy Athletic Association made use of the Riverside Park grounds for many of its events, beginning in 1895. The *Bethel News* of October 23 reported "the Gould Academy Athletic Association held their field day of sports at Riverside Park "with a goodly number of spectators assembled on the grandstand and throughout the grounds of the park." In the evening, the *News* article continued, "a reception was held at the Bethel House followed by an oyster stew supper".

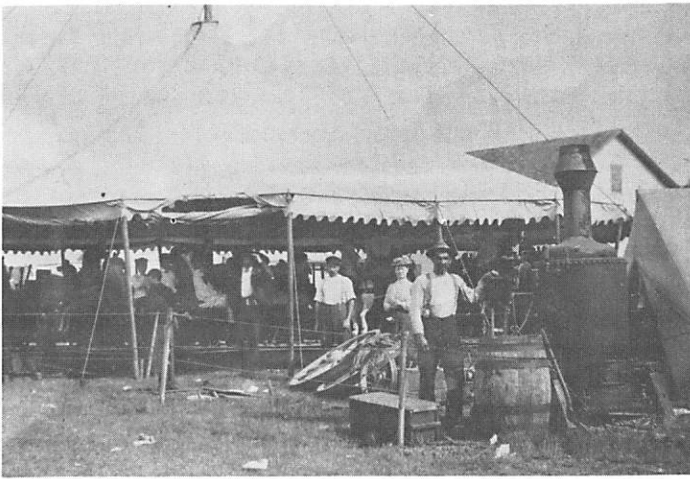
The "town fair" of 1896 was greeted with a number of changes and improvements at Riverside Park. The trotting track had been newly fenced, new cattle sheds had been constructed nearby and the former church, now "Floral Hall" had been prepared, under the direction of Bethel's Dr. Francis Tuell, for a large variety of exhibits. The managers of the fair had decided to have two parades on the fairgrounds — one for the farmers and a second for the local "traders." With Eben S. Kilborn and Gerald Smith manning the entrance gate (those attempting to sneak in without paying were charged double if caught), the fair opened. The "Farmers Parade" took place on the second day and formed at the entrance of the track. It was led by the Norway band, followed by the officers of the Park Association in carriages. A. W. Valentine was next in a corn and vegetable-trimmed vehicle after which came numerous cattle. The following day's parade was made up of "fancy horses, driving teams and bicycles," among other things.

By all accounts, the fair at Riverside Park seems to have reached a high point during this period. Besides the refreshment stands, game booths and the ever-present merry-go-round, the exhibits, both of livestock and of produce and crafts within the old church, spelled out an awareness of the value of local agriculture as it had developed especially since the advent of the first farmer's clubs. One observer of the 1896 affair commented that "the show . . . surpasses anything ever seen in Bethel." In that year, among the many prize winners were listed Henry and Wallace Farwell for the best herd, H. S. Hastings for the best stallion in the county and Arthur Morrill for the largest variety of fruit raised on one farm.

The seventh annual fair of the Riverside Park Association took place during the following year (1897) on September 7-9. Noted as having "excellent weather and large attendance," the fair also encouraged people from all over western Maine and parts of New Hampshire to that "delightful spot in Mayville" for the usual excitement provided by the horse trotting. Of the spot by the Androscoggin, one person wrote, "what better location can be found for bringing together a fine showing of farm stock than at the handsomely located grounds in Mayville."

In 1897, besides the Universalist building serving meals, there were tents and booths near the grandstand selling "fruit, confectionery, cigars, cold drinks, hot buttered popcorn, pies, cakes, peanuts, ice cream and cheap beer." One cherished souvenir was a photograph, perhaps taken by local photographer Irving Kimball, for twenty-five cents.

Of the other fair attractions along the "mid-way" the local papers listed Walter Gordon of Waterford with his shooting gallery and H. L. Heath of West Sumner, who had a new kind of swing. It was reported that a bullet from one of the shooting



Merry-Go-Round at Riverside Park, 1890s
Photograph courtesy of Emeline V. Heath

galleries on the grounds went through the fence surrounding the track and stuck Orrington H. Pingree in the back of the neck. Luckily, this bit of excitement at Riverside Park ended in only a minor injury to this fairgoer.

Among the exhibit hall displays in 1897 were a large assortment of oil paintings, one example of which was an oil painting labeled "Made by Miss C. W. Hale of Fryeburg Academy nearly one hundred years ago." But it was the races, "one of the crowning features of the fair," that Bethel people took greatest pride in during the annual event. Most agreed that the trotting events at Bethel were "unexcelled by any fair in western Maine."

Described as "a record breaker" and "a fair worthy of the town in which it's held," the 1898 event, held during the second week in September, continued the pattern of attendance already established. Of the livestock brought to Bethel, one *Bethel News* reporter wrote, "From the steps of the old church at the entrance of the fairgrounds you could see animals, drove after drove, herd after herd - they came from the north, south, east and west." Indeed, on the first day of the fair, the horse stalls and cattle sheds were filled before ten o'clock and the fair managers wondered what to do if more entries came in.

Taking part in the fair of 1898 were several of the local granges, all of which had displays in the old church. It was noted that Mrs. F. F. Bean had made the banner displaying the name and number of the Bethel Grange, No. 56, which had a majority of the exhibits. One of the oddest was a tree raised from a castor oil bean planted a year previous by I. A. Cushman of South Bethel; the tree's height of some six feet and leaves "of immense dimensions" attracted the attention of all who entered the "Floral Hall."

In addition, Round Mountain Grange of Albany and Newry's Bear River Grange also had good exhibits that year. One visitor to the hall later wrote, "the people here have simply outdone themselves in displaying farm products." Mr. E. P. Grover had the largest individual exhibit in the building. Among the usual "mid-way" attractions that year were numerous food stands, a "tin-type tent" handled by Bethel photographer Wilfred Bowler, a shooting gallery operated by Harold S. Stanley and various games at which the usual charge was a nickel to participate. Nearby to the clatter of the merry-go-round, a number of dry goods dealers from all over the county were displaying their wares. Calvin Bisbee had leased the dining pavilion usually operated by the local Universalist Society and was carrying on a thriving business. Among the more interesting displays were three styles of White sewing machines exhibited by Benjamin

EDITOR'S CORNER

Readers of the *Courier* interested in the history of the town of Hanover, Maine (part of which was originally within the present town of Bethel) will be interested to learn that Alfred Howard has completed *A History of Hanover, Maine, 1774-1980*, 575 pages, 232 photographs. It can be ordered from Mr. Howard for \$35 plus \$1.75 Maine sales tax and \$2.00 for postage. His address is R 5, Box 278, Augusta, Maine 04330. A review of this book will appear in the spring issue of the *Courier*.

SRH

Lovejoy, a dog-powered Leval cream separator exhibited by Porter Farwell (described by the *News* account as one who is "interested in home dairying and believes in modern methods"), and a copy of the first newspaper published in America, "The Boston News Letter" (1704) displayed by Mrs. Jacob Annas. Near the cattle sheds, visitors found George and Claude Goddard busy with a cage of "Virginia Rats" which attracted much attention.

Beyond the smaller attractions, the racing once again caught almost everyone's eye. Still regarded as one of the best half mile trotting tracks in Maine, the Riverside Park track witnessed heated competition on the days the fair was held with the Norway Cadet band presenting selections between individual races. At the same time, the pulling matches and judging of livestock brought throngs to Mayville for several hours entertainment. All in all, the fair of '98 did much to uphold the events' reputation for promoting the town of Bethel and the success of the area's agricultural production.

(To be continued in the next issue)

IN MEMORIAM

Died, December 3, 1984, Elsie York, contributing member of the Society.

Died, December 26, 1984, Mabel S. Greenleaf, Society member since 1971.

BETHEL HISTORICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEES 1984-85

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1985 BETHEL HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAMS

January 3, Annual "So You Think You Know Bethel;" February 7, Historical Film Series; March 7, Annual Collector's Night; April 4, "Chapman Street Through the Years"; May 2, Ben Conant, "Captain Snow and the Falls"; June 6, Roland Decoteau, "William Rogers Chapman: Musician"; July 4, Annual Picnic, Stanley Howe, "The Greenback Movement in Western Maine"; August 1, Maurice Whitten, "Antique Autos"; September 5, Pot Luck Supper, Annual Meeting; October 4, Annual "What's It"; November 7, Thomas Hubka, "New England's Connected Farm Buildings"; December 5, Annual Christmas Program. All meetings will be held at the Society's headquarters, the Dr. Moses Mason House and will begin promptly at 7:30 p.m. The annual picnic and the pot luck supper will begin at 6:30p.m.



Marjorie MacArthur Noll

MEMBER PROFILE

Marjorie MacArthur Noll was born in New Haven, Connecticut and spent her early years in Hamden, Connecticut. She is married to George H. Noll, a retired engineer and came to Bethel from Covington, Virginia. The mother of two children, she also has three grandchildren. She has long been active in the West Parish Congregational Church, the Middle Intervale Meeting House Society, the American Red Cross, and the Bethel Historical Society. For several years Mrs. Noll was the extremely dedicated co-chairman of the Museum Committee who took responsibility for scheduling guides in the Dr. Moses Mason House. She also was very active on the Membership Committee and has been a devoted and willing worker for the Society in its many activities.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Julia B. Brown, Bethel, is retired and has long been active in several committees of the Society. She has also made several important donations to the Society's collections.

John and Inez Conzelman, Palm Springs, California, also have a home on Grover Hill, Bethel.

Dorothea Hitzrot, Bethel, recently moved to Bethel and owns a house on Chapman Street.

Don McAllister, Norway, is a Roman Catholic priest, who also is very active in researching and writing local history.

Marcia Moss, Concord, Massachusetts, has ties with the Grover family of Bethel.

Join the Bethel Historical Society dedicated to preserving and interpreting the local past.

Membership in the Society entitles you to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) free admission to the museum | (5) quarterly newsletter |
| (2) special discounts at museum store | (6) reduced course fees |
| (3) preferred rate for meeting room rental | (7) voting rights in the Society |
| (4) special library and archival privileges | (8) special invitations to Society occasions |

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BOOK REVIEW

Donald H. Bray *They Said It Couldn't Be Done; The Mount Washington Cog Railway and Its History*. (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984) pp. x, 172, \$19.95.

Ellen Crawford Teague, *I Conquered My Mountain; The Autobiography of Ellen Crawford Teague*. (Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing, 1982) pp. ix, 159, \$13.95.

Students of White Mountain history, admirers of nineteenth century American engineering technology, railroad enthusiasts, and those intrigued by the inner workings of one of the most unusual tourist-oriented businesses in North America, will find much of interest in two recently issued volumes dealing with the Mount Washington Cog Railway. Authors Donald H. Bray and Ellen Crawford Teague have written the first major works to appear on the subject since Glen M. Kidder's *Railway to the Moon*, published in 1969. While both books devote much to the general history of this unique mountain railway (the first of its kind in the world), it is to Bray's work that the White Mountain scholar and armchair historian will probably turn for a detailed summary of its development.

Donald Bray took his first ride on the Cog in 1935 at the age of four and has been following its course in one way or another ever since. In his book, the author devotes chapters to a general description of Mount Washington's climate and topography, to a detailed account of a modern-day mountain ascent by rail, to an explanation of how the railway was conceived, constructed, and operated under the watchful eye of inventor Sylvester Marsh, and to how the continuous operation of the railway for well over a century has affected White Mountain tourism as a whole. The book does leave a few questions unanswered while attempting to cover a great deal of historical territory. Having read under the frontispiece that "the author...has been closely associated with the Mount Washington Railway for many years," this reviewer still wonders exactly what connection Mr. Bray has had with the line in the recent past. His knowledge and firsthand experience would seem to indicate employment by the railway, though nowhere does that fact appear. Notwithstanding, in this well-researched compilation, Donald Bray brings to light information uncovered from sources hidden or unavailable to previous historians. He also challenges several notions regarding the railway's development and operation that do not seem to be substantiated by the historic record. A well-organized roster of Mount Washington Railway equip-

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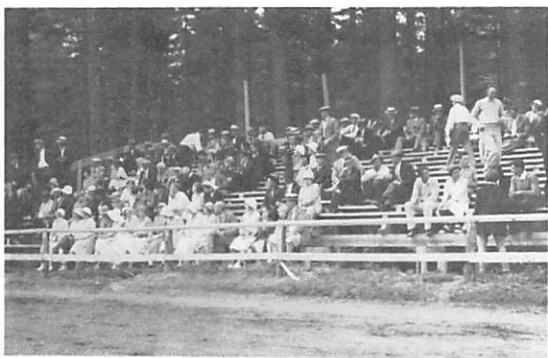
ment (engines, passenger cars, and work cars), both past and present, completes the book.

Readers interested in a glimpse behind the scenes into the life and times of the Teague family, owners and operators of the Cog for fifty of the last eighty-four years, would do well to read Ellen Crawford Teague's autobiography, based largely on her experience as president of the railway after her husband's tragic death. A Philadelphia socialite and descendant of some of Mount Washington's pioneers, Mrs. Teague trained to be a nurse; an unusual case took her to Florida where she met Colonel Henry Teague, then-owner of the Cog Railway. Teague introduced Ellen Crawford to his manager Arthur Teague (no relation) and several months later the couple had a wartime wedding. The scene quickly changes to the railway where Ellen Teague was to raise a family while overcoming a series of tragedies with faith and optimism. Two weeks after her husband's death, Mrs. Teague had to face the loss of a daughter due to an auto accident. Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Teague was confronted with the railway's only accident to cause passenger fatalities. Alternating between first and third person narrative, the book goes on to tell of how this indefatigable woman subsequently coped with strikers, bureaucrats, frustrations, and more sorrow when another daughter, a diabetic, became blind and later died. Often heartwrenching, Mrs. Teague's book nevertheless provides a powerful and unique vantage point from which to view the Mount Washington Railway's colorful history.

Beyond providing rail service up and down Mount Washington's steep slopes, the Cog Railway opened up the awesome experience of a visit to the summit to an entire nation, indeed, the whole world. In these well-illustrated volumes, this engineering marvel, now a living museum of steampowered transportation, is given recognition as a priceless part of our American heritage.

Randall H. Bennett

The Bethel Historical Society
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Riverside Park, c. 1930
Photograph courtesy of Ralph S. Hall

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